

## AMERICAN REGISTER FOR BRITISH SHIP PYRENEES.

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MARCH 10, 1904.—Ordered to be printed.

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Mr. PERKINS, from the Committee on Commerce, submitted the following

### REPORT.

[To accompany S. 1750.]

The Committee on Commerce, to whom was referred the bill (S. 1750) to provide an American register for the British ship *Pyrenees*, having considered the same, report it back with amendments and recommend that the bill pass.

A like bill was favorably reported from this committee near the close of the Fifty-seventh Congress. The report on that bill is appended and adopted as the report of the committee on the present measure, as follows:

The facts in the case are fully presented in the report of the House Committee on the Merchant Marine and Fisheries on a like bill in that body, which report is as follows:

"The evidence shows that the British four-masted bark *Pyrenees*, in latitude 2° north, at least 1,500 miles from any land, caught fire, and that her captain steamed directly south for Pitcairn Island, but, finding no succor or anchorage there, was forced to take his vessel to Manga Reva, an island in the Gambier group, about 260 miles to the westward. There he ran the vessel on a reef, and later beached her. He there left his ship grounded, afire, and full of water, with one mast disabled and the other in a doubtful condition. She was, at the time he left her, December 20, 1900, burning from end to end, and it was about 4 feet from the top of the water to the top of the cargo inside of the ship. The cargo was settling and the water rising. The decks were all burned out, fore and aft, as well as the cabin and woodwork, and the stand for steering gear was broken. The beams were badly twisted and buckled by heat, and the mizzenmast careened about 4 degrees.

"The island of Manga Reva is approximately 4,000 miles south of San Francisco, the same distance west of Chile, and somewhat farther from Australia. The captain, upon leaving the vessel, proceeded to Tahiti, 900 miles, and from there to San Francisco, where he reported the condition in which he had left the vessel, and where the wreck was offered for sale at public auction at the Merchants' Exchange, and was sold for \$265, conditional on the acceptance of this bid by the underwriters. The bid was subsequently rejected, and vain attempts were made to sell the ship in London and Auckland, New Zealand.

"After considerable negotiation, which is set forth in the evidence, Capt. I. E. Thayer, who some twenty years before had lived at Tahiti and was doing business there, and was acquainted with the methods and moods of the natives and the location of the islands, bought the ship for \$1,250. He then provided, at San Francisco, Cal., engines, pumps, and all the appliances adapted to such an enterprise, and took

with him to Tahiti about 30 tons of wrecking material, and one assistant. There he chartered a schooner, which took him and his material to the island. He was obliged to go 500 miles out of his course in order to get laborers. All movable articles had been taken away from the abandoned ship. No rebuilding could be done, as there were no materials available, and there were only two white men and native laborers to do everything; and these natives had never been aboard a square-rigged ship, and were consequently of little service.

"After three months, however, Captain Thayer succeeded in floating the vessel, and fifteen days later sailed for Tahiti. The decks had been burned and the vessel was simply a shell, and there was barely enough lumber at Manga Reva to about one-third cover the warped and twisted deck beams. The partially burned and water-soaked cargo was nearly a full load for the ship. One mast was entirely without yards. No sails were bent on the other yards above topsails, because this crew of 20 natives, who had never before seen a full-rigged ship, could not be depended upon in case of bad weather.

"The voyage to Tahiti took twelve days, and before undertaking the voyage to San Francisco Captain Thayer had to return to that city and procure additional sails and stores for the voyage, and the voyage took some sixty-seven days.

"After arrival at San Francisco a thorough survey of the ship on dry dock and afloat showed that there was damage which necessitated the removal of 150 deck beams and 102 outside plates, 26 of which had to be removed on the dry dock. Thirty-four more plates had to be straightened. Also, 34 floor plates had to be removed, 12 of which had to be renewed.

"The expenses incurred to date are shown to have been more than \$23,000. Proposals submitted for the repair of the hull of the ship from the leading iron works of San Francisco range from \$58,000 down to \$40,200. Besides this, there are excluded from the specifications various items that it is proposed to supply and necessary to be supplied in addition to the \$40,200, such as deck planks, rigging, sails; cabin, pantry, and galley fixtures; lockers, ropes, nautical instruments, and bolts, aggregating some \$15,000 to \$18,000. The evidence submitted shows that the expenses of placing the ship in a seaworthy condition will represent some fifty times the price paid for her.

"In view of the fact that all the requirements of the general law, Revised Statutes, section 4136, will have been complied with before the vessel can obtain her United States register, except that she was not wrecked in American waters, your committee believe that this technical bar should be removed, and would state as reasons therefor the following:

"The repairs that will be put upon this vessel are not only much greater than three-fourths the cost of the vessel when so repaired, but are so great as to amount to practically the building of a new ship. The great bulk of the expense of saving the vessel was paid in the United States for wrecking material and appliances taken out to do this work.

"Though the vessel was wrecked some 4,000 miles from our Pacific coast, there was absolutely no other place than that coast to turn to for succor in an emergency of this character.

"There appears to be nothing in the admission of this vessel to American register that would injure the shipbuilding or shipping interests upon the Pacific coast or elsewhere.

"It can indeed be said that the case is exceptional. It can not be a frequent occurrence that vessels should be wrecked in so remote and out of the way a locality, or if so wrecked, that they will ever be saved and brought to the United States. We accordingly recommend the passage of House bill 17284."